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2/20/04**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

Applicant: Bruce C. Monk et al
Serial No.: 09/994,399
Filed: Nov. 26, 2001
Title: Validation And Verification
Apparatus And Method

Date: January 28, 2004
Group Art Unit: 2625
Examiner: Aaron W. Carter

HON. COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231

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RESPONSE TO SECOND OFFICE ACTION

Technology Center 2600

This paper is in response to an Office Action dated September 16, 2003.

Please amend the claims as shown in the attached "CLAIM AMENDMENTS". A number of claims have been cancelled, some claims amended, and some new claims added.

COMMENTS

The Examiner first states that the applicant's arguments for claims 12 and 16 are persuasive and the rejections of claims 12 – 14, 16 – 30 and 32 are withdrawn. Continuing, the Examiner then states that upon further consideration a new grounds of rejection is made in view of US patent 5,933,526 to Sklarew.

The Examiner rejects the applicant's argument that the "prior art does not teach or fairly suggest determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents, and retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents, where individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second characteristics." and refers to Figure 11 in the Mennie patent.

To overcome this rejection the applicants have amended claims 1- 5, 11 – 13 and 31; have cancelled claims 6 – 10, 14 – 30 and 32; and have added new dependent claims 33 – 37. The amendments to the applicant's claims and the new claims clearly distinguish applicant's